

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method for introducing a new project initiative into a business, comprising the steps of:

receiving, into a computer system, project information related to the new project initiative from a developer of the new project initiative;

5 opening a new initiative program within the computer system related to the received project information;

progressing, within the computer system, through a series of project development stages wherein the project is developed from conception through manufacture/implementation;

10 referencing and attaching additional materials to the new initiative program that are relevant to a review and approval process;

electronically notifying at least one approver about the new initiative program; and

15 receiving an approval determination from the at least one approver indicating whether the new initiative program should advance from a current stage to a next stage.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of receiving project information further comprises the steps of:

20 receiving program type information related to a type of initiative being introduced;

receiving owner identification information related to a individual responsible for the program; and

receiving marketing tollgate information relating to information collected during an initial determination by a marketing group regarding whether to open the new initiative program.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of opening a new initiative program further comprises the steps of:

assigning a unique program identifier to the new project initiative;

displaying a new project initiative program graphical user interface to the developer, wherein the new initiative program graphical user interface includes a plurality of stages, milestones and checklist items that together outline to process for introducing the new project initiative to the business.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the step of progressing through a series of project development stages further comprises the steps of:

progressing through a first stage relating to market development of the new project initiative;

progressing through a second stage relating to assessment and initiation of the new project initiative;

progressing through a third stage relating to development of the new project initiative;

progressing through a fourth stage relating to scale-up and sampling of at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative;

progressing through a fifth stage relating to commercialization of a selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative; and

progressing through a sixth stage relating to implementation of the selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a first stage relating to market development of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

determining whether a first tollgate should be passed indicating that the new project initiative has been approved for introduction;

receiving, into the computer system, an indication that introduction of the new project initiative has been approved if it is determined that the first tollgate should be passed;

receiving marketing information relating to information collected during the first tollgate determination;

displaying an indication that the first tollgate has been passed; and

permitting advancement to the second stage.

6. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a second stage relating to assessment and initiation of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

receiving, by the computer system, a request to view a collection of milestones and checklist items associated with the second stage, wherein at least one of the milestones requires completion on the part of a user;

receiving, into the computer system, project assessment and initiation information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion; and

electronically notifying at least a second stage approver that a second stage approval determination must be made.

7. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the second stage approval determination from at least the second stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the third stage;

- 5 permitting advancement to the third stage if the determination from the second stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the third stage; and

denying advancement to the third stage if the determination from the second stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the third stage.

- 10 8. The method of claim 6, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to initiate a second stage approval workflow;

determining whether all milestones requiring completion have been completed;

- 15 initiating the second stage approval workflow if it is determined that all milestones requiring completion have been completed, wherein the second stage approval workflow includes the step of:

electronically notifying at least the second stage approver that a second stage approval determination must be made; and

- 20 receiving a request from at least the second stage approver to review at least the project assessment initiation information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion.

9. The method of claim 8, further comprising the steps of:

- 25 receiving the second stage approval determination from at least the second stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the third stage;

permitting advancement to the third stage if the determination from the second stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the third stage; and

denying advancement to the third stage if the determination from the second stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the third stage.

10. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a third stage relating to development of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

receiving, by the computer system, a request to view a collection of milestones and checklist items associated with the third stage, wherein at least one of the milestones requires completion on the part of a user;

receiving, into the computer system, project development information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion; and

electronically notifying at least a third stage approver that a third stage approval determination must be made.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the step of receiving, into the computer system, project development information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion further comprises the step of receiving formulation information relating to at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative.

12. The method of claim 11, further comprising the steps of:

electronically notifying at least legal and environmental health and safety representatives regarding the formulation information relating to at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative;

receiving a request from at least the legal and environmental health and safety representatives to review the formulation information;

determining whether an approval from at least the legal and environmental health and safety representatives has been received;

denying advancement to the fourth stage if it is determined that the approval from the at least the legal and environmental health and safety representatives has not been received;

receiving a request for a temporary exemption to the requirement for the approval from the at least the legal and environmental health and safety representatives;

permitting temporary advancement to the fourth stage upon receipt of the request for a temporary exemption.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the temporary exemption is a 30 day exemption.

14. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the third stage approval determination from at least the third stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the fourth stage;

permitting advancement to the fourth stage if the determination from the third stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the fourth stage; and

denying advancement to the fourth stage if the determination from the third stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the fourth stage.

15. The method of claim 10, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to initiate a third stage approval workflow;

determining whether all milestones requiring completion have been completed;

initiating the third stage approval workflow if it is determined that all milestones requiring completion have been completed, wherein the third stage approval workflow includes the step of:

electronically notifying at least the third stage approver that a third stage approval determination must be made; and

receiving a request from at least the third stage approver to review at least the project development information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion.

16. The method of claim 15, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the third stage approval determination from at least the third stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the fourth stage;

15 permitting advancement to the fourth stage if the determination from the third stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the fourth stage; and

denying advancement to the fourth stage if the determination from the third stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the fourth stage.

17. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a fourth stage relating to scale-up and sampling of at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

receiving, by the computer system, a request to view a collection of milestones and checklist items associated with the fourth stage, wherein at least one of the milestones requires completion on the part of a user;

receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation scale-up and sampling information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion; and

electronically notifying at least a fourth stage approver that a fourth stage approval determination must be made.

18. The method of claim 17, wherein the step of receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation scale-up and sampling information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion further comprises the step of receiving customer feedback information relating to the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative.

19. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the fourth stage approval determination from at least the fourth stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the fifth stage;

permitting advancement to the fifth stage if the determination from the fourth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the fifth stage; and

denying advancement to the fifth stage if the determination from the fourth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the fifth stage.

20. The method of claim 17, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to initiate a fourth stage approval workflow;

determining whether all milestones requiring completion have been completed;



initiating the fourth stage approval workflow if it is determined that all milestones requiring completion have been completed, wherein the fourth stage approval workflow includes the step of:

5 electronically notifying at least the fourth stage approver that a fourth stage approval determination must be made; and

receiving a request from at least the fourth stage approver to review at least the preferred implementation scale-up and sampling information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion.

21. The method of claim 20, further comprising the steps of:

10 receiving the fourth stage approval determination from at least the fourth stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the fifth stage;

15 permitting advancement to the fifth stage if the determination from the fourth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the fifth stage; and

denying advancement to the fifth stage if the determination from the fourth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the fifth stage.

20 22. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a fifth stage relating to commercialization of a selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

receiving, by the computer system, a request to view a collection of milestones and checklist items associated with the fifth stage, wherein at least one of the milestones requires completion on the part of a user;

25 receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation commercialization information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion; and

electronically notifying at least a fifth stage approver that a fifth stage approval determination must be made.

23. The method of claim 22, wherein the step of receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation commercialization information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion further comprises the step of receiving capability and audit plan information relating to the selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative.

24. The method of claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the fifth stage approval determination from at least the fifth stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the sixth stage;

permitting advancement to the sixth stage if the determination from the fifth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the sixth stage; and

denying advancement to the sixth stage if the determination from the fifth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the sixth stage.

25. The method of claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to initiate a fifth stage approval workflow;

determining whether all milestones requiring completion have been completed;

initiating the fifth stage approval workflow if it is determined that all milestones requiring completion have been completed, wherein the fifth stage approval workflow includes the step of:

electronically notifying at least the fifth stage approver that a fifth stage approval determination must be made; and

receiving a request from at least the fifth stage approver to review at least the commercialization information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion.

26. The method of claim 25, further comprising the steps of:

5 receiving the fifth stage approval determination from at least the fifth stage approver regarding whether the new project initiative should be advanced to the sixth stage;

10 permitting advancement to the sixth stage if the determination from the fifth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced to the sixth stage; and

denying advancement to the sixth stage if the determination from the fifth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative should not be advanced to the sixth stage.

15 27. The method of claim 4, wherein the step of progressing through a sixth stage relating to implementation of a selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative further comprises the steps of:

receiving, by the computer system, a request to view a collection of milestones and checklist items associated with the sixth stage, wherein at least one of the milestones requires completion on the part of a user;

20 receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation performance information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion; and

electronically notifying at least a sixth stage approver that a sixth stage approval determination must be made.

25 28. The method of claim 27, wherein the step of receiving, into the computer system, preferred implementation performance information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion further comprises the step of receiving at least

field performance assessment results information relating to the selected one of the at least one preferred implementation of the new project initiative.

29. The method of claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the sixth stage approval determination from at least the sixth stage approver regarding whether a status of the new project initiative should be advanced to complete;

permitting status advancement to complete if the determination from the sixth stage approver indicates that the status of the new project initiative should be advanced to complete; and

denying status advancement complete if the determination from the sixth stage approver indicates that the status of the new project initiative should not be advanced to complete.

30. The method of claim 27, further comprising the steps of:

receiving a request to initiate a sixth stage approval workflow;

determining whether all milestones requiring completion have been completed;

initiating the sixth stage approval workflow if it is determined that all milestones requiring completion have been completed, wherein the sixth stage approval workflow includes the step of:

electronically notifying at least the sixth stage approver that a sixth stage approval determination must be made; and

receiving a request from at least the sixth stage approver to review at least the performance information for completing the at least one milestone requiring completion.

31. The method of claim 30, further comprising the steps of:

receiving the sixth stage approval determination from at least the sixth stage approver regarding whether a new project initiative program status should be updated to complete;

- 5       advancing the status of the new project initiative program to complete if the determination from the sixth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative program status should be updated to complete; and

denying status advancement of the new project initiative program to complete if the determination from the sixth stage approver indicates that the new project initiative program status should not be updated to complete.

- 10   32.   A method for introducing a new project initiative into a business, comprising the steps of:

compiling new project initiative marketing information;

determining whether the new project initiative should be introduced to the business based upon the new project initiative marketing information;

- 15       receiving, into a computer system, new project initiation information related to the project if it is determined that the new project initiative should be introduced;

receiving, into the system, at least assessment and initiation information related to a second stage of the new project initiative;

- 20       electronically notifying at least a second stage approver that a second stage approval must be made based upon at least the assessment and initiation information;

receiving, at least from the second stage approver, a determination regarding whether the project should be advanced from the second stage to a third stage;

advancing the project to the third stage if the determination indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced from the second stage to the third stage;

receiving, into the system, at least project development information related to a third stage of the new project initiative;

electronically notifying at least a third stage approver that a third stage approval must be made based upon at least the project development information;

5 receiving, at least from the third stage approver, a determination regarding whether the project should be advanced from the third stage to a fourth stage;

advancing the project to the fourth stage if the determination indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced from the third stage to the fourth stage;

10 receiving, into the system, at least preferred implementation scale-up and sampling information related to a fourth stage of the new project initiative;

electronically notifying at least a fourth stage approver that a fourth stage approval must be made based upon at least the preferred implementation scale-up and sampling information;

15 receiving, at least from the fourth stage approver, a determination regarding whether the project should be advanced from the fourth stage to a fifth stage;

advancing the project to the fifth stage if the determination indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced from the fourth stage to the fifth stage;

receiving, into the system, at least preferred implementation commercialization information related to a fifth stage of the new project initiative;

20 electronically notifying at least a fifth stage approver that a fifth stage approval must be made based upon at least the preferred implementation commercialization information;

receiving, at least from the fifth stage approver, a determination regarding whether the project should be advanced from the fifth stage to a sixth stage;

advancing the project to the sixth stage if the determination indicates that the new project initiative should be advanced from the fifth stage to the sixth stage;

receiving, into the system, at least preferred implementation performance information related to a sixth stage of the new project initiative;

- 5 electronically notifying at least a sixth stage approver that a sixth stage approval must be made based upon at least the preferred implementation performance information;

receiving, at least from the sixth stage approver, a determination regarding whether a status of the new project initiative should be updated to complete; and

advancing the status of the project to complete if the determination indicates that the status of the new project initiative should be updated to complete.